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ABSTRACT

In view of increased numbers of international students attending colleges and universities in the United States and the resulting need for librarians to be aware of these students' information needs, this study analyzes data assembled from 56 responses by international students to a questionnaire distributed at Kent State University (Ohio). The questionnaire elicited demographic and other information regarding these students' use of the library and their particular information needs. Results show that the greatest number of Kent State international students are 26-30 years old, male, in a graduate program, and attend school full-time. Many respondents (78.8%) expressed a desire for multicultural materials in the library such as more current native language books, journals, magazines, and newspapers. Many respondents also indicated a general lack of familiarity with online catalogs and other library automation. A literature review explores ways in which other colleges have dealt with the problem of bibliographic instruction and library orientation for international students. Seventeen tables summarize the data. (Contains 16 references.) (BEW)

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SURVEY OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION NEEDS OF THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Darlene E. McKenzie

May, 1995

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ABSTRACT

Increasing population of international students attending higher education in the United States makes it necessary for librarians to be aware of students' special informational needs. This systematic sampling of international students at Kent State University attempts to identify these needs. A questionnaire was developed and sent to 200 international students at Kent State University eliciting demographic and other information regarding their use of the library and particular informational needs. The questionnaire was answered by 56 respondents. Results indicated that most international students are 26-30 years old, male, in a graduate program, and attend school full-time. Many international students indicated that they did not have extensive experience in using the technology in libraries in America or their native country. Services international students use most are reference and interlibrary loan (ILL). They would like the library to contain more current native language books, journals and magazines, and newspapers. Size of the collection and the library, and the accessibility of materials in the American library are factors that are different from their native country libraries.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

The number of international students enrolled in higher education continues to increase. In 1980, 286,000 foreign students were enrolled in higher education; by 1985 the figure was 342,000 and by 1992 there was 420,000 foreign students attending higher education in the United States. This was an increase of over 46 percent comparing the 1992 figure with the 1980 figure (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1993).

The increasing population of international students in the United States' institutions of higher education made it necessary for the academic library to take into consideration the special needs or concerns of these students. Trujillo and Weber provided an examination of the academic library's role in a multicultural campus, including roles of administration, library staff, and the collection itself (Trujillo and Weber 1991). The presence of a multicultural population on campus could lead to greater tolerance and understanding between the people of the world (Liu 1993).

According to Brogan, there were many campuses where international students were crucial to the continuation of some graduate programs. For example, at the University of

Minnesota there was an international graduate student population of 20 percent, but in many of the engineering, economics, and science graduate programs the population was over 50 percent of enrollment (Brogan 1987). The students could be older and more mature than American students. They could also be recognized professionals in their fields in their native countries, but have chosen to expand their education in a distant country (Macdonald and Sarkodie-Mensah 1988).

In the past most international students came from European countries, where the customs and culture were more similar to the United States' customs and culture. This is no longer true today. Presently many students are coming from Asia who are not familiar with the customs, language, and culture of the United States, and the people of the United States are not familiar with the students' cultural background (Liu 1993). If the trend in demographics continues at the current rate, in approximately two decades the changes in population could make it difficult to tell who was a minority (Kflu and Loomba 1990).

Background of the Study

Students coming from a wide diversity of cultures have had different experience with libraries in their countries. Many international students are unfamiliar with the open stacks in libraries, the classification system and reference materials (Liu 1993). In some countries collections are

outdated, borrowing policies are restrictive and materials are censored. Elsewhere libraries only exist in large cities and contain only books: no other type of information is available (Koehler and Swanson 1988). Many international students previously learned by lecture and recitation by the teacher; thus it was unnecessary to do research in the library for their studies (Macdonald and Sarkodie-Mensah 1988).

There are also linguistical and cultural differences to be aware of while international students are using the library. Problems with language cause difficulties in alphabetizing and, therefore, using periodical indexes. Cultural values prevent students from admitting they need help until they are desperate, or the students never ask for assistance (Koehler and Swanson 1988). A lack of experience working with students with poor English proficiency leads to a frustrating encounter for both the librarian and the student (Ormondroyd 1989). Concepts of personal space also vary for different cultures, North Americans feel comfortable at approximately five feet apart while Arabs feel comfortable at two feet apart from another person (Ball and Mahoney 1987).

Purpose of the Study

What do these international students want from the academic library? What are their special needs and concerns and do they feel these are being addressed satisfactorily?

The purpose of this study is to explore the needs and attitudes of the international students using the academic library at Kent State University.

Definition of Terms

International students are defined as students who have come to the United States to continue their education from another country.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited specifically to international students enrolled at Kent State University. Therefore the findings are not necessarily generalizable to all foreign or international students.

CHAPTER II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A majority of the literature seems to be divided into several areas. One area is the programs for international students in bibliographic instruction. Helping librarians to become more sensitive to international students' customs and cultures is another area. There are several surveys about the difficulties international students had using the academic library in the United States.

A librarian involved in course-integrated instruction at Cornell University, Joan Ormondroyd, described the librarian's participation in the program. From 1979, through trial and error, the program was expanded from two to four sessions, which included a hands-on tour, a general introduction to the library, concepts on research strategy, use of the online catalog, and use of the periodical indexes. A guided research topic was assigned and after completing that students were asked about their research strategies. After the spring of 1989 a fifth session was added so that librarians could receive feedback from the students after their research projects (Ormondroyd 1989).

Dick Feldman, a lecturer in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at Cornell University, described a program to help international students effectively use the library. By having library sessions in a classroom in the library, the students were able to have demonstrations of various indexes, the card catalog, and other tools of research strategy. After students had the experience of using these tools in a guided research task, the librarian returned to the classroom to receive feedback from the students on their experiences in the library. In evaluation of the library class and workshop, the students showed an average score of just over three on a scale of one to five in confidence in their library skills (Feldman 1989).

At Rutgers University Library there is a program offering library orientation in English, Chinese and Korean languages. Liestman and Wu described this program, Library Orientation for International Students (LOIS), as a way to meet the library needs of international students. LOIS's goal is to introduce the American style academic library to international students and to specifically show the students the complicated Rutgers University Library resources and services available to students. It was anticipated that the native language sessions would be more popular with newer students while the English language sessions would be popular with students who had used English longer. The Library of Science and Medicine (LSM) and the Alexander

Library for graduate research in the social sciences and humanities were chosen as the sites for the orientation. The sessions were promoted throughout the campus and were conducted during the third and fourth weeks of the semester. Specific goals for the session were to enable students to get help from a reference librarian, search and locate a book, use circulation, search and locate a periodical and learn how to use the resources to get material from other libraries. Although attendance was low, which prevents generalization, the results of pre-and post tests indicated that the students in the sessions conducted in English improved, but students in sessions conducted in their native language showed greater improvement on their scores (Liestman and Wu 1990).

At the Augsburg College in Minneapolis, Koehler and Swanson developed a four-phase program to teach bibliographic instruction (BI) to international students. Students were diverse in their cultural backgrounds, but all lacked a comprehension of a bibliographic search. The program used a classroom lecture, a hands-on session in a controlled setting, and a guided library practicum to ensure greater success in bibliographic searching. Pretests were administered to assess the students' readiness for BI. The results of the pretest were used to develop the inclass presentation. After participating in the program, posttests showed students had improved their knowledge of BI. The

attitudes of students also showed improvement, with less fear and more confidence in their ability to use the library (Koehler and Swanson 1988).

For universities with an enrollment of international students of less than 4 percent of the total enrollment the program at the University of California-Davis would provide a model for library orientation. According to Hoffman and Popa the program, Library Orientation and Instruction for International Students (LOIIS), was designed to help international students to use the academic library efficiently and independently. The students had difficulties with classification, online catalogs, library terminology, and open stack/self-service policies. Through a series of workshops and seminars the authors hoped to create an atmosphere of understanding and tolerance toward international students for public service personnel by dispelling stereotypes and focusing on real issues, problems, and differences. International students were given a brochure and a glossary of library terminology, which was the guide of the library's walking tour. Orientation lectures and tours were held during International Students' Orientation Week. Starting with informal presentations and handouts, and followed by formal presentations, the program sought to have librarians become more culturally aware and the students more library aware. Tours of the library were given and at the end of the tour

an evaluation was given to the students. A majority of the students rated the library tour and lecture as good to excellent. Evaluation of the program would continue to help further refine and develop the program (Hoffman and Popa 1986).

In order to be successful in teaching research strategies to international students, teachers and librarians need to understand more clearly the abilities, backgrounds, and expectations of international students. Macdonald and Sarkodie-Mensah described ways of improving communication between librarians and international students. One way is to increase knowledge of international students' culture and linguistics. Things to avoid are using library jargon, speaking loudly and very slowly, using an oversimplified vocabulary, and assuming that because of speaking difficulties students have a limited intelligence. Librarians should use clear and interesting language with adequate explanation of terminology; using analogies could prove to be helpful to communicate with students at this point (Macdonald and Sarkodie-Mensah 1988).

The authors, Greenfield, Johnston and Williams, reported on a workshop at the University of Arizona where the library in conjunction with the English Department, the International Student Offices and the Center of English as a Second Language designed a program to help train library staff to communicate more effectively with international

students. The workshop used videotapes as well as role playing to make participants aware of the difficulties students from other countries and cultures had in the library. Examples were also given of class instructions for library use; one tape was for American students and the other tape was altered to meet the needs of the international student. Differences were noted and a list of do's and don'ts were given to each participant. After participating in the workshop, library staff reported an increasing awareness of how they communicate with international students (Greenfield, Johnston, and Williams 1986).

At the University of Michigan, Ball and Mahoney reported on the efforts of the academic library to increase awareness of the problems international students could have in the library. Helping students to become aware of the services the library has to offer was recommended by building a positive relationship between librarians and students. Since many countries do not have the resources to do independent research, instruction on how to do a research project is important (Ball and Mahoney 1987). Liestman provided examples of different types of library instruction or programs to use while designing a library program to instruct international students in bibliographic searches (Liestman 1990).

There have been techniques developed to help librarians

communicate effectively with international students, including seminars on cultural difference, tours and instructional sessions of the library, and tours given in native languages. Kwasi Sarkodie-Mensah believed these techniques were a good beginning, but that a further understanding of the international student was necessary. By being aware of pronunciations people use and aware of different topics of conversations which may not be appropriate for the librarian and student, the librarian would be able to respond to students in a quicker fashion. The author recommends taking classes in a foreign language or culture as a way to increase awareness of the difficulties international students had while using an academic library (Sarkodie-Mensah 1992).

A study, designed by Liu, explored the problems students from developing countries (mostly Asia) had in using American academic libraries. The study was conducted by interviewing fifty-four students at the University of California, Berkley. Students were doctoral, and other graduate and undergraduates with majors in natural science and humanities and social science. The study found that because of language problems students had limited language skills and lacked confidence to ask the librarian for assistance. The Library of Congress (LC) Classification was

new and confusing to most students, with over 85 percent not understanding how to use LC subject headings. In this survey, however, 70 percent of the students found the American card catalog easier to use than the one in their native country because the American card catalog was alphabetized. Recommendations included having handouts of library terminology and rules in English and in students' native languages, tours of the library in English and the students' native languages, and having library staff become more aware of the international students requirements in the academic library (Liu 1993).

A user survey of international students was developed by Allen at the University of Illinois. The study used a six-page questionnaire to explore the students' patterns of use in the library. Questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of 750 international students out of the University's 3401 population of international students. This report focused on the international students' use of computers. Findings indicated that many of the students did not use many of the activities provided by the library to help them efficiently use the library. The data would indicate that students did not have difficulty using the online catalog, especially if they had previous computer experience. The author recommended that librarians develop library instruction not only for undergraduates, but to include

graduate students who may be unfamiliar with bibliographic access and the services available from the library (Allen 1993).

CHAPTER III.

METHODOLOGY

For this study a one page questionnaire was sent out to 200 international students enrolled at Kent State University during the fall of 1994. Names and addresses were obtained from the International Student Services Office. Since many international students live on campus it was possible to use campus mail to deliver the questionnaires. Kent State University has a large academic library which is a government depository and contains many automated services available to students.

A questionnaire was used so that a large number of samples could be obtained in a shorter period of time (see Appendix A)

Types of information asked from the students included:

Country of origin
age
major
gender
degree of study
previous experience with American libraries
previous experience with electronic databases
previous experience with online catalog
did they take a tour of the library

Another area explored is: What do the international students want from the library? Would they like more multicultural materials; if so what items? Would they be interested in having a librarian come to a class and give a lecture on

bibliographic instruction? These are just a sample of the questions that appeared on the questionnaire.

Systematic sampling was used on the total population of International students at Kent State University. The study took place during the beginning of the fall semester in 1994. Statistics were obtained by using the statistical program SAS.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of the survey included the responses of 56 international students out of the 200 surveys sent out, a return rate of 28%. The largest percentage of students came from Asia, with 32 percent coming from the People's Republic of China (see Table 1). The students surveyed had a wide variety of majors; however, 21.8% of the students listed physics as their major (see Table 2), followed by business which was 14.6%. The majors of business and education were condensed to include such majors as accounting, finance, early childhood education, and music education.

The largest percentage of students was between the ages of 26-30 years old (see Table 3) and the smallest group was for those students under 25 at 16.1%. The largest percentage, 58.9 percent, of students were participating in a doctoral program at Kent State University (see Table 4), followed by graduate programs at 32.1%. A majority of international students were full-time students and males (see Tables 5 & 6).

Many of the students had experience using American libraries with 44.6 percent indicating that they had some experience in American libraries (see Table 7). However

Table 1.

Distribution of International Students by Native Country

Native Country	f	%
Bangladesh	2	3.8
Canada	2	3.8
Eritrea	1	1.9
France	1	1.9
Greece	1	1.9
Hong Kong	3	5.7
India	5	9.4
Iraq	1	1.9
Israel	2	3.8
Italy	1	1.9
Korea	4	7.5
Kuwait	1	1.9
P.R. China	17	32.0
Poland	2	3.8
Russia	1	1.9
South Africa	1	1.9
South Korea	2	3.8
Spain	1	1.9
Taiwan	1	1.9
Thailand	1	1.9
Turkey	1	1.9
Yugoslavia	2	3.8
Total	56	100.0

Table 2.

Distribution of International Students by Majors

Majors	f	%
Architecture	3	5.5
Biology	4	7.3
Biomedical Science	1	1.8
Business	8	14.6
Communication	1	1.8
Computer Science	2	1.8
Education	6	11.0
English	1	1.8
Ethnomusicolgy	1	1.8
French-Pedagogy	1	1.8
Food and Nutrition	1	1.8
Geology	2	3.6
Library Science	1	1.8
Mathematics	5	9.2
Pharmacology	1	1.8
Physiology	1	1.8
Physics	12	21.8
Social Science	1	1.8
Theater	2	3.6
Translation (Spanish/English)	1	1.8
Total	55	100.0

Table 3.

Distribution of International Students by Age

Age (in years)	f	%
Under 25	9	16.1
26-30	17	30.4
31-35	15	26.8
36 and older	15	26.8
Total	56	100.0

Table 4.

Distribution of International Students by Degree of Study

Degree of Study	f	%
Undergraduate	5	8.9
Graduate (Masters)	18	32.1
Graduate (Doctorate)	33	58.9
Postgraduate	0	0.0
Total	56	100.0

Table 5.

Distribution of International Students by Student Status

Status	f	%
Part-time	4	7.1
Full-time	52	92.9
Total	56	100.0

Table 6.

Distribution of International Students by Gender

Gender	f	%
Male	38	67.9
Female	18	32.1
Total	56	100.0

Table 7.

Previous Experience of International Students Using American Libraries

Type of Experience	f	%
No experience	24	42.9
Some experience	25	44.6
Extensive experience	7	12.5
Total	56	100.0

42.9% had no previous experience using American libraries. The largest amount of experience the international students had in using electronic databases was 58.2 percent with some previous experience using databases (see Table 8), followed by no previous experience which was 29.1%. Exactly one half of the respondents had previous experience in using an online catalog (see Table 9), while 39.3 had no experience using an online catalog. In the respondents' native country the largest percentage, 67.3 percent, had no experience in using electronic databases (see Table 10).

Table 8.

Previous Experience of International Students Using Electronic Databases

Type of Experience	f	%
No experience	16	29.1
Some experience	32	58.2
Extensive experience	7	12.7
Total	55	100.0

Table 9.

Previous Experience of International Students Using Online Catalogs

Type of Experience	f	%
No experience	22	39.3
Some experience	28	50.0
Extensive experience	6	10.7
Total	56	100.0

Table 10.

Experience of International Students Using Electronic Databases in their Native Country

Type of Experience	f	%
Had experience	18	32.7
Had no experience	37	67.3
Total	56	100.0

Of the 55 respondents who answered the question on taking a tour of the library, 50.9% did take the tour (see Table 11). Only one international student was beginning his first semester at Kent State University (see Table 12), while 98.2% were in the midst of their program.

Services of the library that most of the international students used were reference at 87.5% (see Table 13), followed by interlibrary loan (ILL) at 75.0%. The two services that respondents wanted more explanation about were electronic databases at 51.8% followed by online services at 39.3% (see Table 14). It was also suggested that the librarians use small groups in their workshops to help with the language barrier.

Table 11.

Number of International Students taking Tour of Library

Toured the library	f	%
yes	28	50.9
no	27	49.1
Total	55	100.0

Table 12.

Number of International Students attending First Semester

First Semester	f	%
yes	1	1.8
no	55	98.2
Total	56	100.0

Table 13.

Library Services that International Students Use

Services	Yes		No		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Reference	49	87.5	7	12.5	56	100.0
Online	38	67.9	18	32.1	56	100.0
Electronic databases	35	62.5	21	37.5	56	100.0
PAIS	26	46.4	30	53.6	56	100.0
ILL	42	75.0	14	25.0	56	100.0
Reserve desk	33	58.9	23	41.1	56	100.0
Special Collection	9	16.1	47	83.9	56	100.0
Foreign Language Newspapers	29	51.8	27	48.2	56	100.0
Government Documents	20	35.7	36	64.3	56	100.0

Table 14.

Services International Students Would like more Information on Usage

Services	Yes		No		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Reference	10	17.9	46	82.1	56	100.0
Online	22	39.3	34	60.7	56	100.0
Electronic Databases	29	51.8	27	48.2	56	100.0
PAIS	14	25.0	42	75.0	56	100.0
ILL	8	14.3	48	85.7	56	100.0
Reserve Desk	7	12.5	49	87.5	56	100.0
Special Collection	13	23.2	43	76.8	56	100.0
Foreign Language Newspapers	9	16.1	47	83.9	56	100.0
Government Documents	16	28.6	40	71.4	56	100.0

A majority of the international students, 78.8% (see Table 15), would like the library to contain more multicultural materials. The type of materials most students would like were native newspapers at 40.6% (see Table 16), followed by native journals or magazines at 32.4%. The differences between American libraries and their native libraries dealt with the access to computers and electronic services and books (see Table 17). The size of the building, the number of volummes, and the variety of materials were also mentioned as some of the differences between the two types of libraries.

Table 15.

Distribution of International Students on the Library Containing more Multicultural Materials

Should the Library contain more Multicultural items?	f	%
Yes	41	78.8
No	11	21.2
Total	52	100.0

Table 16.

Multicultural Materials International Students would like the Library to Contain

Materials Wanted	f	%
Native newspapers	15	40.6
Native journals/magazines	12	32.4
Current books in native language about native countries	9	24.3
Foreign films	1	2.7
Total	37	100.0

Table 17.
Different Aspects of Kent State University Libraries compared to International Students' Native Library

Different Aspects	f	%
Access to computer services and technology	20	42.6
Online Service	7	14.9
Size of building and number of volummes (bigger)	6	12.8
Access to materials	5	10.6
ILL	5	10.6
Easier and quicker to find materials	4	8.5
Total	47	100.0

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this time of increasing enrollment of international students in higher education, it is important for librarians to be aware of what international students use and do not use in the library. This survey showed the majority of international students at Kent State University were full-time students, male and in a graduate program. Many of their majors were concentrated in the areas of the sciences and business. These findings were similar to those cited in articles by Brogan (Brogan 1990), and Allen (Allen 1993).

Few international students felt they had extensive experience in using American libraries, online catalogs, or electronic databases. In their native country, a majority of students did not have any experience using electronic databases. These results show the need for the library to provide more opportunities for the international student to become aware of and use some of the electronic materials that are available at Kent State University Library.

Less than half of the international students used Special Collections, Government Documents, and Public Affairs Information Service (PAIS); however when asked, less than half wanted more information about these services.

International students may not be aware of the types of information that can be obtained from these areas of the library. If the library could make students aware of these services and the type of information they could provide, more students would use them.

International students would like the library to contain more current native language books, journals and magazines, and newspapers. However if students were made aware of the foreign newspapers to which the library has subscriptions and the online technology that is available, this could provide some of the up-to-date information the international student is seeking.

Because of cultural differences, international students may not be comfortable asking for assistance from library staff. The size of the library and the collection could be intimidating for students not used to the size and accessibility of the materials. By using small groups in the library or going to classes, librarians could encourage international students to use the services the library has to help them with their research.

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